Local Elites and Italian Town Planning Procedures in Early Colonial Tripoli (1911-1912)

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NOTES

1. Roderic Owen, quoted in *The Desert Air Force* (London: Hutchinson, 1948), p. 13.
2. Major General Sir Francis de Guingand., *Generals at War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), p. 71.
3. Brigadier C.E Lucas Phillips, *El Alamein* (London: Heinemann, 1962), p. 17.
4. General Sir Charles Richardson, *Flashback: A Soldier's Story* (London: William Kimber, 1985), p. 102.
5. Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1958), p. 91.
6. Lucas Phillips, op. cit., p. 13.
7. Virginia Cowles, *The Phantom Major: The Story of David Stirling and the SAS Regiment* (London: Collins, 1958), p. 235.
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9. Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Peniakoff, *Private Army* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), p. 276.
10. Richardson, op. cit., p. 135.
11. Lucas Phillips, op. cit., . p. 12.
12. Alan Moorehead, *The Desert War: The North African Campaign 1940-1943* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965), p. 52.
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14. Field-Marshal Lord Carver, *El Alamein* (London: Batsford, 1962), p. 76.
15. Air Vice-Marshal J.E Johnson, *Full Circle: The Story of Air Fighting* (London: Chatto & Windus 1964), p.221
16. Major General G.P.B. Roberts, *From the Desert to the Baltic* (London: Kimber, 1987), pp. 34-5.
17. Ronald Lewin, *The Life and Death of the Afrika Korps* (London: Batsford, 1977), p. 130.
18. Peniakoff, op. cit., pp. 276-77.
19. Ibid., p. 224.
20. Squadron Leader Maurice Smyth, quoted in Richard Townsend Bickers, *The Desert Air War 1939-1945* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), p. 96.
21. Lucas Phillips, op. cit., pp. 16-7.
22. Lewin, op. cit., pp.150-51.
23. Major General Sir Francis de Guingand, *Operation Victory* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947), p. 130.
24. See Hugh Patterson, Poem: 'Tobruk' quoted in *Freedom's Battle*, Vol. 3 *The War on Land 1939-1945*, edited by Ronald Lewin (London: Hutchinson, 1969), pp. 108-9.
25. Moorehead, op. cit., p. 157.
26. Ibid., p. 113.
27. Ibid., p. 55.
28. Ibid., p. 58.
29. Denis Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939-1945. Vol.1: The Fight at Oads* (London: HMSO, 1953), p. 277.
30. Peniakoff, op. cit., p. 168.
31. Letter of 20 November 1942 from Leese to his wife, Lady Margaret, quoted in Rowland Ryder, *Oliver Leese* (London: Hamilton, 1987), p. 118.
32. Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *El Alamein to the River Sangro* (London: Hutchinson, 1948), p. 69. In fact, this was written by Major General R.F.K. Belchem, who had been one of Montgomery's staff officers, under Montgomery's direction.
33. Owen, op. cit., p. 157.
34. Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: Master of the Battlefield 1942-1944* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1983), p. 119.
35. Moorehead, op. cit., p. 59.
36. Letter of 20 November 1942 from Leese to his wife, quoted in Ryder, op. cit., p. 118.

Local Élites and Italian Town-Planning Procedures in Early Colonial Tripoli 1911-1912[1]

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The Historical Background

The object of this paper is the drawing up of the first Italian colonial *Piano regolatore* in Tripoli, under the perspective of an analysis of the process (negotiation/conflict/imposition) that led to this plan. We aim at putting together our experiences to study a colonial technical and bureaucratic planning procedure under the light of the relationships between a local municipality and an externally imposed form of planning. We will try to understand how things went in Tripoli in the crucial moments of 1911-1912, when the Italians launched their first colonial plan in an Arab city. Our interest is not to study the technical and architectural content of the plan but instead, as historians, to explore the social and administrative context of decision making about colonial planning.

Most of coastal Libya was occupied by Italy at the end of 1911. In July 1911, after France seized Fez, San Giuliano, the Italian Foreign Affairs Minister, advised Prime Minister Giolitti to implement the conquest of Libya, at which Italy had been aiming for a long time. The Italian presence in the Ottoman province of Tripolitania was already strong, mostly through the action of the Banco di Roma, which was pushing its government to launch a military campaign, as did the Nationalists in Italy. The war against the Ottoman Empire and the local Arab resistance began at the end of September 1911, and Italy quickly took control of the main coastal cities. But the occupation of the inner parts of the country proved to be much more difficult.

In November 1911, the Prime Minister Giolitti withdrew from all negotiations with the Ottomans, and declared the annexation of Libya. Talks with the Ottoman Empire resumed only in the autumn of 1912.[2] At the end of 1911, Italy had to prove to the other colonial powers[3] and to the local population that its occupation was to last, and that Italian colonial rule was efficient.

It is in this context that the first attempts to draw up a plan, a *Piano regolatore*, for the city of Tripoli emerge. The modernization of the city they had just seized

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was a matter of image for the Italians. They had to prove that their rule was more efficient and modern than that of the Ottoman one.[4] But the question was: who was going to be in charge of town planning? The military occupation administration, *Genio Civile* engineers from the Public Works Ministry, or even the local municipality, inheritors of the Ottoman administration, in which was represented the local notability?

The Italians could not afford simply to abolish the municipality at a time in which they needed support, or at least neutrality, from the urban population. But in Italy, town planning was a highly municipal matter, and colonial conquerors could not even imagine leaving the future of the main city in their colony in the hands of local Arab notables. The Arab mayor remained in office and most of the municipal administration too, but an Italian General Secretary of the Municipality was named in order to control and supervise the action of local urban powers. But even this was not enough for town planning, a field where, in Italy, municipalities had a wide range of powers.

Since national unity was achieved, and even before, town planning had been a municipal competence in Italy. In the early 1860s, the newly unified Italian Kingdom had inherited from a previous Piedmontese law its code on urban regulation. In the Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia, town planning had been a municipal competence for decades. Cities like Turin or Nice had been deeply transformed by these procedures, symbols of the power of the local notabilities on urban space.[5] In 1865, the Italian Act on Municipalities confirmed town planning as a matter of municipal responsibility (Legge 20/03/1865, art. 70). This act was later complemented by an Act concerning Public Utility Expropriation (25/06/1885) that gave municipalities the power to implement their plans. These acts were later modified, in 1888 for example, but remained the basis of municipal town planning in Italy until the 1942 Fascist laws on Towns and Plans.[6] From the time, they when had been excluded from the chief responsibility of reforming cities, the *Genio Civile*, engineers from the Ministry of Public Works, had been trying for decades to gain power in this field. But their only successes were in situations of emergency, such as in Naples after the 1884 cholera crisis, when the State took control of planning and sanitation, through the 1885 special Act.[7] But even this emergency action was not welcomed by municipalities, who feared that Napales might become a model for the state to curtail municipal powers of cities, and had to face numerous protests from the city council, the mayor and local entrepreneurs in Naples, and even from various municipalities elsewhere in the peninsula.

Even in Rome, the capital city, the *Genio Civile* administration failed to take control of town planning, and was kept in a role of formal supervision of the activities of the municipal town planning office.[8] In Rome, the 1873, 1883 and 1909 plans were drawn up under control of the municipality. *Genio Civile* was mostly excluded from the town planning process.

Town Planning in the Colonial Context

In a colonial context, choices about town planning would prove essential. Army engineers and civil engineers were both willing to take control of this field of competence, and within a few months, not only the future of Tripoli was decided, but also the kind of colonial rule Italy would impose on Libya. During the end of 1911 and all 1912 an intense bureaucratic turmoil shook the new colonial administration about the decisions for planning. Both the Army and the *Genio Civile* wanted this competence to be theirs. Even if it soon became clear that the municipality was to be fully excluded from technical decision-making, the Italians understood very quickly that they were to have to deal anyway with local municipal *élites* for expropriation procedures. Italians were aware that only a few among urban notables had been considering their occupation positively, or at least had not joined the ranks of the resistance, and avoiding confiscation of their properties was the least they could do.

But the main struggle was between the Army and civil engineers from the Public Works Ministry. Through the setting of a new colonial planning procedure, we can follow the Italian choices in the construction of a colonial rule and the definition of an administrative scheme of competence. In a few months, the relationships between colonial administration and local *élites* were to be defined. Choices on planning, in an Italian context, where these procedures covered almost all urban fields, were an important sign of how the new power was to impose its rule on the seized province and town.

It is worth noting in this context that the first decisions on planning was the pursuit of the war inside the country, and the extreme fragility of the Italian conquest in the face of the Arab resistance. Planning in early colonial Tripoli was no quiet matter. Municipal *élites* in Tripoli were still in contact with the resistance inside the province, and even if some of them chose to collaborate with the Italians, most of them remained very prudent. The *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* in Rome keeps many letters, which were intercepted by the Italian secret service, from members of the municipality to the chiefs of the resistance.[9] Even those Libyans whose animosity to the Ottomans made them close to the Italians before the conquest, were now beginning to reconsider their position.

In Italian Tripoli, the municipality remained in charge, but soon lost most of its powers. Local *élites* were excluded from the town planning process, and municipal offices lost most of their urban competences. The municipality, as a place of expression of the Arab municipality, was to become an empty shell. Only later, the Italian were to give back some competences, but in the new context of a municipality controlled by settlers.

Already in October 1911, the Mayor Hasuna Pasha, though remaining in charge, was controlled by a Naval High Officer, Faravelli. As chief of the urban civil services, Faravelli was to act as a Mayor.[10] In November, municipal services were reformed according to Italian standards, but the Mayor still had no effective power

and the offices of the municipality were in fact controlled by the Italians. Thus the municipality never gained any competence in the field of town planning. Municipality then, as representative of local population, was under close scrutiny by the Italian occupation administration. At the same time, planning was discussed between the Army, the Government and the *Genio Civile*.

A *Regio Decreto* (8/10/1911) gave the Commander of the expedition troops political power over Tripolitania and Cirenaica, and the army used this power to push its arguments for planning. But speculation was high, and already in November a new *Regio Decreto* (20/11/1911) aimed at blocking all transactions in land. Representatives from the Army were not innocent in the speculation turmoil. In January 1912, General Caneva, Governor of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, renewed this ban on land transactions and added a ban on rent increases.[11]

For the military administration, the housing problem became a source of great anxiety, and it is through this question that they came to talk of the need for inaugurating a planning procedure. Pressure was intense from private investors also to lift the ban on land transactions.[12] A *Piano regolatore* was seen as a solution. For the Army, and the new landlords, it did provide some protection. The problem was: how to launch a *Piano regolatore* without losing their special competence on urban transformations? The risk for the Army, in promoting a normal Italian procedure, was to be obliged to surrender competences to normal administrations. *Genio civile* or municipality in that case. The new battle for the Army in Tripoli became accordingly to convince Rome to let the Plan remain the object of an extraordinary military competence.

Although Italian private investors in Libya stressed in a letter to the Governor the necessity of not doing anything that could offend the interests of the rich Arabs of the city,[13] the military administration often failed to understand this. In Rome, the Government began to worry about such activities.

Before the drawing up of a plan, the first urban decisions were concessions on public services in January 1912.[14] But during this same month of January, the Public Works Ministry sent to Tripoli one of its high-ranking engineers, Luigi Luiggi, *Ispettore Superiore del Genio Civile*, in order to examine the situation of urban projects and to assess the powers of the Army. A few weeks earlier, the Prime Minister Giolitti, responding to the pressures of the civil administration, had given the *Genio Civile* responsibility for the port and civil works.[15] In February, an office of the *Genio Civile* was created in Tripoli.[16]

In March, Luiggi, back in Rome after his Tripoli journey, published in the *Nuova Antologia* his first project for a plan for Tripoli: *Diagramma di Piano Regolatore dei dintorni di Tripoli*. Marida Talamona has studied the architectural content of this project.[17] But what is interesting to note here is how little coordination there was, as the archives show, between the Luiggi mission in Tripoli and the colonial administration.

In March we find in the archives the first traces of a planning process.[18] It is a study by the director of civil affairs in Tripoli about the juridical basis of a plan in

Tripoli. He recommends that the interests of "the natives should not be forgotten," in order to preserve the "cause" of the Italians.

He also recommends, in a very interesting remark, the "education of the natives with regard to the modern organization of a municipality". These recommendations seem to be oblivious of earlier achievements, forgetting that the Ottoman municipality was already well-organized, and that even before the creation of a municipality by the Ottomans more than forty years before, the Arab city had had a rational administrative organization for decades, if not centuries. The Director stated that a real Municipality was a goal to reach in Tripoli. He was the representative of the kind of colonial rule which was more attentive to the interests of the local population but which had not understood that this local population had not been waiting for the Italians, or even the Ottomans, to build an urban administration and that modernization had already been implemented in the field of urban government in the late 1860s.

Since at least the 18th century, Tripoli, like most other Arab cities, had enjoyed a rational urban organization. It had a town council, the *Jama'at al-bilad*, directed by the Chief of the Town, *Shaikh al-bilad*, head of the *Mashikha al-bilad* urban administration. This administration had broad urban competences on streets, houses, walls, markets and urban taxes.[19] It had also control over house building. At the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman municipality, created in 1867 and partially inspired in its shape by European models, only reproduced what already existed before. The *Shaikh al-bilad* became the Mayor, and *Jama'at al-bilad* members became members of the municipal council.

The Italian administrator also states that his office has prepared a new decree for Tripoli, inspired by the special law for Naples. No sign of collaboration with the Luiggi mission emerges, as if the colonial administration wanted to promote its own policy towards planning, without even referring to those whom the government had named for the tasks. Responsible for this plan would be: "the governor, because he is the supreme authority in the colony", and "the municipal administration."

To confront the arrival of civil engineers from the Public Works Ministry, the colonial administration tried to invent in Tripoli a mixture of common Italian law and the Naples exception. The edict stressed that the intervention of civil engineers would only be "technical," and it stated its aim with uncompromising clarity — to "limit the action of *Genio Civile*." It also recommended the intervention of the *qadi* in the process of expropriation.[20] The Army seemed to be rediscovering the Arab existing administration just in order to prevent direct rule from Rome and the *Genio Civile* over the city.

Planning Versus Bureaucracy

One month later, the conflict between the colonial administration and the Luiggi mission became even clearer. When the civil engineer Albino Pasini, chief of *Genio Civile* in Tripoli, adapted the Luiggi plan to local conditions, the civil affairs

directorate in Tripoli asked for direct intervention by the Prime Minister. We found a very clear letter in the archives in Rome.[21] Writing to Peano, chief of the cabinet of the Prime Minister, the director in Tripoli intimated: "I write to you in order to clear up a misunderstanding." He added that the Luiggi *Genio Civile* mission "ignored all instructions", and that he was surprised to learn that the government was about to approve the plan. He then asked some very precise questions:

- Who is empowered to approve the Plan?
- Who will pay?

The director in Tripoli noted that his administration intended to create a modern municipal administration in Tripoli, and that urban planning should be one of its main competences. Direct planning from the Public Works Ministry in Rome would lead to the failure of this project. He warned, too, about the risks of expropriating *indigeni* without a clear process of compensation, and was fearful of the consequences of the action of *Genio Civile* in this field. The conflict was of *Genio Civile* in Rome vs colonial administrators in Tripoli. The interest of the municipality and so-called *indigeni* were of course only pretexts.

But in April, the Luiggi-Passini plan was still pushed by the Public Works Ministry, and letters between the civil administration in Tripoli and the offices of the Prime Minister in Rome show that the main preoccupation was to bar any action from the military administration in the urban field.[22] In May, a letter of Lieutenant General Briccola, chief of the occupation corps command, shows little openess towards the natives: he says that procedures have to be simple because "they can't understand what is not utterly simple."[23] No doubt: the role of the municipality was just a pretext!

In June the conflict still raged, after the commander of the occupation corps had approved the plan without asking the central government. On 6 June 1912, Giolitti wrote himself to Lieutenant General Caneva, governor of Libya, drawing his attention to "the competences of the central government".[24] *Piani regolatori* in Tripolitania and expropriation procedures were "matters reserved to the competence of the central government and are to be dealt with through Royal Decrees." The army in Tripoli tried then to find an escape from this prospect of a loss in its competence over the city. Having understood that losing the ordinary competence on the whole urban space was already a reality, it asked for 600 000 sq. m. to be conceded under an exceptional status. The Prime Minister agreed immediately to the request (09/06/1912)[25] for land concession by the Army, but specified that any building construction in this area would have to be included in the *Piano regolatore*, and must fit its norms, exclusive competence of the Public Works Ministry and its *Genio Civile* engineers. So, within a few months, both the army occupation corps and the municipality lost their control over the transformations of the urban space. *Genio Civile* was the winner, thanks to the Prime Minister's wish not to let the Army rule the city and to decide its future.

Still in June, the governor Caneva tried again to tell the Prime Minister that even in Tripoli, where the municipality did not decide anything, a difference had to be

made in the plan between works of municipal interest and works of government interest.[26] Also during June 1912, the civil engineer Simonetti was already in Tripoli to draw a more precise plan, as the dispute on administrative competences continued.

In a secret letter to Peano, chief of the cabinet of the Prime Minister, Caruso, director of civil affairs in Tripoli, set-forth an interesting panoramic account of the plan.[27] He wrote that military administrators were unable to deal with the civil administration, and that he had himself great difficulty to see a copy of the plan because of the lack of openness from both sides, the Army and *Genio Civile*. A few days earlier he had indeed written: "I don't know what is happening about the plan."[28] As soon as he obtained a copy of the plan, he said, he would give it to the municipality.

It is in this month of June that the government really began to worry about what is happening with the Tripoli plan. Giolitti wrote: "I can't understand how the chief commander of Libya can have thought he had the competence to approve the plan."[29]

And in July, a letter from the Public Works Minister Ettore Sacchi to his friend Giolitti shows that the government has already come to a decision: the State will take care of the city, modernization, through the *Genio Civile*:[30] " Anyway I share your opinion on the absolute necessity for the State to keep control on the Piano regolatore (...) without interference from the municipality." "An office directly subordinate to the State will have to deal with the implementation of the plan." "Competences of the municipality have to be limited." The Public Works Ministry also intended to fight the attempts of the military administration to grant licenses for public transportation or lighting through the municipality. The answer from Giolitti was very clear:[31] "I agree with you on all points"; "I gave orders to limit the competences of the various authorities in Libya".

By August it was clear that the military administration had lost administrative control over the city: the Prime Minister asked Lieutenant General Briccola not to do anything about expropriation before the arrival of Public Works engineers.[32]

The Triumph of the Élites

In September the Pasini *Genio Civile* Plan was approved: with two Royal Decrees[33] the *Genio Civile* had won its battle for planning Tripoli, and when in 1913 the Minister of African Italy was created, its position was already strong.

Although the 1914 Simonetti plan[34] empowered governors to approve small variations to the general directions, the power of the Public Works Ministry on the colonial town was set for three decades. Thus in a few months from the end of 1911 to the summer of 1912, the municipality lost most of its potential power, as did the Army. The municipality had the misfortune of being defended by some military authorities whose power was to be temporary and of having to face a the *Genio Civile* bureaucracy whose desire to exrecise a technical control over the colonial

city was very intense. But in this process the Italian colonial authorities failed to link local élites to the process of planning, and failed to confirm the powers of a real municipality. The results, planning being a municipal competence in Italy, and this competence being denied to Tripoli's élites, was an early example of Italian incapacity to preserve Italy's tiny support among local notables. The Tripoli colonial *Municipio* consequently had little power, and was not "local", as it did not represent local élites at all. It was logical for Giolitti, who even in Italy wanted to reduce the power of municipalities in planning procedures, to make this choice. But in the context of the war going on inside the country, local notables in Tripoli, except for a few families linked to the Italians for financial reasons, saw no reason to support an Italian occupation that had proved from the very first months that it had nothing to do with the previous Ottoman presence, which had always respected the wish of local élites to rule the city.

NOTES

1. This paper was first presented at a conference of the International Planning History Society in Helsinki in September 2000.
2. See Emilio Gentile, *L'Italia giolittiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), p. 263 and Simone Bernini, "Nazionalismo e collaborazionismo in Libia. I colloqui di Tripoli. Novembre 1912" *The Journal of Libyan Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 2, Winter 2000, p. 54-67.
3. See Zeynep Ceylik, *Urban forms and colonial confrontation. Algiers under French rule*, UCLAP, 1997, p. 236
4. See Mia Fuller, "Preservation and Self-Absorption: Italian colonisation and the Walled City of Tripoli, Libya", *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 4, 2000, pp. 121-154, and *Colonizing constructions: Italian Architecture, Urban Planning, and the creation of modern society in the colonies, 1869-1943*, PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley, 1994.
5. Also: A.A Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization and Resistance, 1830-1932* (Albany: State University of N.Y Press, 1994) and: "Colonialism, State Formation and Civil Society in North Africa: Theoretical and Analytical Problems", *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies*, 11 (1), 1994, pp. 1-22.
6. See Fillipo De Pieri and Denis Bocquet, "Municipal bureaucracies in two Italian Capital cities compared: Turin and Rome (1848-1888)", *Modern Italy*, 2002.
7. See Aurelio Alaimo, *L'organizzazione della città. Amministrazioni e politica urbana a Bologna dopo l'Unità* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), p. 395, p.120.
8. See Giuseppe Galasso (ed.), *Napoli* (Rome: Laterza, 1987), p. 508.
9. See Stefano Tintori, *Piano e pianificatori dall'età napoleonica al fascismo* (Milan: F . Angeli, 1992), p. 393.
10. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Tripolitania, 1912, fasc. 11T.
11. ACS, PCM, Tripolitania, 1912, fasc. 11T. Legislazione della Libia 1911. See also *Baladiyyat Tarablus fi mi'at 'am 1870-1970*, Tripoli, 1970, p.174.
12. ACS, PCM, Tripolitania, 1912, fasc. 6.
13. Ibid.
14. ACS, PCM, Tripolitania, 1912, fasc. 6. Comitato promotore. Società per il commercio in Tripolitania a Cirenaica. 20/01/1912.
15. RD 26/01/1912 che dà facoltà alle amministrazioni di Tripoli e di Bengasi di concedere l'esercizio dei piu urgenti servizi pubblici.
16. See Marida Talamona, "Città europea e città araba in Tripolitania" in G. Gresleri, PG. Massaretti and S. Zagnoni (eds), *Architettura italiana d'oltremare 1870-1940* (Venice: Marsilio).
17. RD 94, 01/02/1912
18. Loc. cit. Luiggi aimed at preserving the medina, at providing it with sewers, and building the colonial city outside the city walls.
19. ACS, PCM, Tripolitania, 1912, fasc. 6. Direzione degli affari civili in Tripolitania. 20/03/1912.
20. See Nora Lafi, *Pouvoirs urbains au Maghreb. Tripoli de Barbarie 1795-1911. Genèse et pérennité des institutions municipales* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).
21. In 1911 the Italians had named a pro-Italian *qadi*. ACS, PCM, Tripolitania, 1912, Letter 29/10/1911. In November 1911 a Caneva decree regulated the Kadi administration.
22. ACS, PCM, Tripolitania, 1912, fasc. 6. Direzione degli affari civili in Tripolitania, 14/04/1912.
23. Ibid., 6, Prot 200T.
24. Ibid., fasc. 6
25. Ibid., fasc. 6. 06/06/1912
26. Ibid., fasc. 6. 09/06/1912
27. Ibid., fasc. 6
28. Ibid., fasc. 6, lettera riservata. 21/06/1912.
29. Ibid., fasc. 6, Prot 302T, 09/06/1912.

30. Ibid., fasc. 6, Prot 290T, 12/06/1912.
31. Ibid., fasc. 6, 04 07/1912.
32. Ibid., fasc. 6, Prot 328T, 12/07/1912.
33. Ibid., fasc. 6, Prot 493T.
34. RD 1098 02/09/1912 and RD 1099 02/09/1912
35. RD 577 15/01/1914
36. Simonetti also worked in Benghazi. ACS, PCM, Tripolitania, 1912, fasc. 6, Prot 673T.

Book Reviews

The Price of Terror, by Allan Gerson and Jerry Adler. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. xiv + 302 pages. Appendix to p. 308. Index to p. 322.

The Price of Terror, "the story of the Pan Am flight 103 families' search for justice" (p. xiv), is compelling reading, especially in the aftermath of the 1 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. The authors describe, sometimes in numbing detail, the efforts of the relatives of the victims of the Pan Am 103 outrage to bring to justice the perpetrators of the most catastrophic terrorist attack on Americans to that time. The attack on Pan Am flight 103 killed more Americans than the sinking of the *Lusitania*. The nose cone of the doomed plane became an icon of international terrorism.

Allan Gerson earned a doctorate in international law at Yale University, and during the Reagan administration served as counsel to US ambassadors at the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick and Vernon Walters. He has also held senior positions in the U.S. Department of Justice and as a Senior Fellow for International Law and Organization at the Council on Foreign Relations. Jerry Adler is an author and senior editor at *Newsweek*. Told in the third person, their book often reads like an immodest memoir of Gerson, who worked off and on for a number of years as legal counsel for some of the relatives of the victims of Pan Am flight 103.

The authors focus on the bureaucratic and legal aftermath of the attack. In so doing, they sketch an intriguing picture of the convoluted nature of the American political and legal systems. Often slow and expensive, both systems regularly visit frustrations and indignities on the very people they are meant to serve. From this perspective, the book is an unintended testimony to how complicated and protracted legal manoeuvrings can become in a litigious society like the United States, especially when tens of millions of dollars are at stake. America is often described as a country of laws, but the message here is that America is a country of lawyers.

In the process, Gerson and Adler, provide a road map for those victimized by the more recent tragedy. Based on the Pan Am flight 103 case, victims of the terrorist acts on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon can expect years of toil, expense, and disappointment in their parallel search for truth and compensation.

In addition, the Pan Am 103 story offers considerable insight into many aspects of contemporary U. S. foreign policy. The authors rightly depict the Reagan administration as eager to take on Libya because, as they quote a retired CIA analyst, "We only want to pick a fight with those we can beat" (p. 91). In so doing, the objective was not necessarily the removal of Qaddafi but rather the isolation of his regime. The Reagan administration, in effect, benchmarked Libya as an example of the kind of international behaviour Washington refused to accept.

The George H.W. Bush administration later displayed a marked ambivalence towards terrorism. Under considerable political pressure, Bush eventually